

GOVT. CONSIDERING UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME, SAYS NHRC

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights Issues - Human Rights and NHRC

Many in the informal sector lost their livelihood during the lockdown. File photo

In its report on human rights in India, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has informed the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) that the recommended implementation of a universal basic income was “under examination and active consideration” of the Centre.

As a part of the third round of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, which is done every four-and-a-half-years, the NHRC submitted its mid-term report to the UN agency recently. The report, dated “May 2020”, reviewed the implementation of 152 recommendations of the UPR Working Group that the Indian government had accepted in September 2017.

One of the recommendations was: “Continue studying the possibility of a universal basic income as a way to further reduce poverty levels with a view to possibly phasing out the existing social protection system, in full consultation with all stakeholders.”

“This matter is under examination and active consideration of the GoI,” the NHRC report noted.

After meeting stakeholders, including civil society, and representatives of the Ministries responsible for implementing the policies concerned, the NHRC said several issues had been highlighted, including the “ratification of international human rights instruments, issues in legislations of trafficking and protection against child sexual abuse” and “gaps in the implementation of schemes for food security and timely disbursement of wages under schemes for employment”.

More funds for health

The report stated that there had been a consensus on the need for increasing budgetary allocation for health and nutrition by the Centre and state governments.

With regards to child rights, the report said the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights was working on a proposal for a pilot project to eliminate child labour in five “aspirational districts with high incidence of child labour”.

On the issue of reproductive rights, the NHRC noted that the Centre had requested the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the Department of Financial Services, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India and the National Health Authority to consider the issue of sterilisation, birth control treatment and procedures expenses not being covered under health insurance policies currently.

Rights of children

The NHRC noted that it had found “gaps in policies as compared to obligations” under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and had made recommendations to address the same. It added that it was in the process of setting up a committee to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against

Women.

To make education more accessible to children with disabilities, the NHRC said it had recommended to the Human Resource Development Ministry in January 2020 to ensure “holistic inclusion” of such children in its Draft National Education Policy.

The NHRC said it had expressed “concern over the inefficiencies in implementation of the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities Act) 1989 and the Rules of 1995” and warned States of coercive action when they failed to submit reports on violation of human rights of SCs, STs and minorities.

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